



Council For Lifelong Learning **Testing**

Fact Sheet

September 2001

<p>1. What is the purpose of the statewide testing program?</p>	<p>The primary purposes of the statewide assessment system are (1) to provide information needed to improve the public schools by maximizing the learning gains of all students and (2) to inform parents of the educational progress of their public school children.</p> <p>Florida Statutes require the assessment program to be designed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• assess the annual learning gains of each student toward achieving the Sunshine State Standards;• provide data for making decisions regarding school accountability and recognition;• identify the educational strengths and needs of students and the readiness of the students to be promoted to the next grade level or to graduate with a standard high school diploma;• assess how well educational goals and performance standards are met at the school, district, and state levels;• provide information to aid in the evaluation and development of educational programs and policies; and• provide information on the performance of Florida students compared with others across the United States.
<p>2. What is the history of the statewide testing program?</p>	<p>The Educational Accountability Act of 1976 outlined a system for defining and measuring the attainment of educational objectives and competencies in basic communications and mathematics functions. Minimum student performance skills--which were based on minimum objectives and were developed cooperatively by the staff of the Division of Public Schools; Florida Department of Education (DOE); faculty of the state universities and community colleges; school district teachers; curriculum and testing supervisors and administrators; and, laypersons--were initially approved by the State Board of Education in 1977.</p> <p>In 1989 and 1990, the State Board of Education approved the most recent version of the <u>minimum performance skills</u>, which are effective for school years 1994-1995 through 1998-1999. The High School Competency Test (HSCT), first administered in October 1994, was designed to assess these <u>minimum</u> competencies. The HSCT is currently being phased out and</p>

replaced by the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) as a requirement for receiving a standard diploma. The FCAT measures student performance standards that represent "world-class" competencies, rather than minimum competencies measured by the HSCT.

The State Board of Education was required by legislation passed during the 1993 Legislative Session to develop and implement a common placement testing program to assess the basic computation and communication skills of students who intend to enter a degree program at any public community college or state university. The College Board was awarded a contract to prepare core placement tests in the areas of reading, writing, and elementary algebra. In July 1995, the postsecondary institutions began implementing the common placement test program.

In 1994, the Department of Education began developing "Sunshine State Standards" in the areas of reading, writing, mathematics, science, history, government, geography, economics, and computer literacy. These standards are a comprehensive listing of what students should know and be able to do as they progress through school and are intended to be student performance standards that represent "world-class" competencies, rather than *minimum* competencies represented by previous standards.

In 1996, the Sunshine State Standards were approved by the State Board of Education and were implemented in every school and school district. Florida Writes! and the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) were designed to measure how well students in grades 4, 5, 8, and 10 achieve these standards in the areas of writing, reading, and math.

The A+ Education Plan provided for the phased-in expansion of the administration of the FCAT to grades 3 through 10 (Ch. 99-398, L.O.F.). In addition, science proficiency must be measured statewide beginning in 2003. The Legislature also made the FCAT a high-stakes test by linking student FCAT performance to school grades, teacher and administrator bonuses, and high school graduation requirements. **(See the FCAT Fact Sheet, the School Grading System Fact Sheet, the Merit Pay Fact Sheet, and the Graduation Standards Fact Sheet.)**

3. What tests are Florida students required to take?

Norm-Referenced Tests (NRT)

A locally determined, norm-referenced test in reading and mathematics is administered at the elementary and middle school levels. As of 1998, these tests were no longer required by the state, but could be administered at the option of the local school board. However, in 1999, the A+ Plan required that the FCAT contain norm-referenced components. Beginning in the 1999-2000 school year, the Stanford 9 became the norm-referenced component for the FCAT and was administered to all students in grades 3 through 10.

The Florida College Entry Level Placement Test (FCELPT)

Common Placement Tests (CPTs) are the assessment tools used to implement the Florida college entry-level-placement testing (FCELPT) program required by the 1993 legislation. A student has the opportunity to take the CPT in the 10th grade and again upon entering a community college or university. A student may not be enrolled in a college credit mathematics or English course unless the student has demonstrated adequate pre-collegiate preparation on the section of the CPT that is appropriate for successful student participation in the course.

The High School Competency Test (HSCT)

The state-designed High School Competency Test (HSCT) is required to be administered at the beginning of grade 11. Passage of both the communications and mathematics sections of the HSCT is a requirement for high school graduation*. Eleventh grade students who do not pass the HSCT on the first administration have additional opportunities to take and pass the test.

* Beginning in the fall of 1999, students who enroll in the 9th grade must earn a passing score in reading, writing, and mathematics on the grade 10 FCAT in order to qualify for a regular high school diploma.

Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT)

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) is a criterion-referenced and norm-referenced assessment that is designed to measure how well students achieve skills and competencies included in the Sunshine State Standards. The FCAT was first administered in the 1997-98 school year.

In the 2001-2002 school year, the FCAT will be administered

	<p>statewide to grades 3 through 10 in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. In the 1999-2000 school year, the Stanford 9 was added as the norm-referenced component of the test. Science assessment is to begin statewide by 2003 and will be administered in grades 4, 8, and 10.</p> <p>Florida Writes! The achievement of Sunshine State Standards for writing is measured by the state-designed Florida Writes! Assessment, which is administered in grades 4, 8 and 10. The Florida Writes! Assessment became part of the FCAT in the 2000-2001 school year. (See the FCAT Fact Sheet.)</p> <p>National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) The Commissioner of Education is required to provide for school districts to participate in the NAEP, a norm-referenced, periodic assessment of what students know and how students perform in various subjects, or a similar program that provides a state-by-state comparison. The norm-referenced assessment is required to only be administered to a sample of students. Florida will participate in the 2001 administration of the National Assessment of Educational Progress. The 2001 administration has two components: 1) a national sampling administration in history and geography; and 2) a smaller-scale field test administration in reading and writing. The national sampling administrations were conducted from January through March 2001. The field test administrations were conducted from February through March 2001.</p>
<p>4. When do children take these required tests?</p>	<p>Beginning in the 2000-2001 school year:</p> <p>Grade 3 FCAT - reading and math Grade 4 FCAT - reading, math, and writing (science beginning in 2003) Grade 5 FCAT - reading and math Grade 6 FCAT - reading and math Grade 7 FCAT - reading and math Grade 8 FCAT - reading, math, and writing (science beginning in 2003) Grade 9 FCAT - reading and math Grade 10 FCAT - reading, math, and writing (science beginning in 2003) *Students who entered as freshmen in fall 1999-2000 school year must earn a passing score on the grade 10 FCAT in order to receive a standard high school diploma Grade 11 HSCT, CPT (optional) *Students who entered as</p>

	freshmen <u>prior</u> to 1999-2000 school year must earn a passing score to receive a standard high school diploma.
5. What are the applicable statutes and rules?	<p>Section 229.053, F.S.-- General powers of state board</p> <p>Section 229.0535, F.S. -- Authority to enforce school improvement</p> <p>Section 229.57, F.S. -- Student assessment program</p> <p>Section 229.591, F.S. -- Comprehensive revision of Florida's system of school improvement and educational accountability</p> <p>Section 229.592, F.S. -- Implementation of state system of school improvement and educational accountability</p> <p>6A-1.09401, F.A.C. -- Student Performance Standards</p> <p>6A-1.0942, F.A.C. -- State Student Assessment Test Requirements for Graduation from High School</p> <p>6A-1.09421, F.A.C. -- High School Competency Test Requirements</p> <p>6A-1.09422, F.A.C. -- Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test Requirements</p> <p>6A-1.09981, F.A.C. -- Implementation of Florida's System of School Improvement and Accountability</p>
6. Where can I get additional information?	<p>Florida Department of Education Assessment & Evaluation Services (850) 488-8198 www.firn.edu/doe</p> <p>The Florida House of Representatives Committee on Education Innovation (850) 488-7451</p> <p>The Florida House of Representatives Council for Lifelong Learning (850) 414-6694</p>